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ABSTRACT

An investigation focused on positive means of recruiting and retaining students needed to reach a goal of 200 students at the Abbeville Career Vocational Center (South Carolina). Two methods used to research pertinent data were a literature search and interviews with key persons who had experienced similar problems. Data were compiled to develop a comprehensive recruitment plan that would provide parents and students with information pertinent to the value of vocational education. This plan included materials, strategies, and timetables for implementation. It was reviewed and revised, and evaluative criteria were established to provide useful feedback for improvement. (An appendix includes the recruitment and retention plan. It encompasses the formation of a recruitment committee, implementation of the plan using existing personnel and funds, and the major expenditures for the revision of the course booklets and transportation for student tours of the career center. Contents include information for a situation analysis, lists of goals and objectives, a marketing strategy, a recruitment/retention action plan, a public relations calendar, and information on controls evaluation.) (YLB)

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DEVELOPMENT OF A COMPREHENSIVE RECRUITMENT PLAN TO INCREASE ENROLLMENT AND RETENTION AT THE ABBEVILLE CAREER VOCATIONAL CENTER

THE EMERGENCE OF VOCATIONAL AND OCCUPATIONAL EDUCATION IN AMERICA

by

Bobby L. Crosby, M. Ed.

Abbeville Career Vocational Center

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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A Practicum presented to Nova University in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Education

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ABSTRACT

The Abbeville Career Center has a capacity of approximately 200 students. At the end of the 1984-85 school year the enrollment had dropped 8.5 percent. One of the reasons for declining enrollment was the absence of a formal recruitment plan to provide parents and students with information pertinent to the value of vocational education.

In order to develop a recruitment plan to increase enrollment at the Abbeville Career Center, a search of literature was made to find relevant materials; interviews were conducted with key persons who had experienced similar problems; and a draft plan was reviewed by key administrators.

This study resulted in the development of a recruitment plan to increase enrollment and retention at the Abbeville Career Center. As a result of this investigation, a plan that included, materials, strategies, and timetables for implementation was developed. Evaluative criteria was established as a means of acquiring feedback useful for assessing the effectiveness of the plan.

As a result of the development of this plan, the recommendations to the Abbeville School District 60 Board of Trustees that included: allocating funds to hire a full-time vocational counselor to implement this plan; developing a plan for monthly meetings of the vocational counselor and high school counselors to discuss recruitment and retention strategies; granting a one-half day inservice to all guidance personnel implementing this plan on an annual basis for orientation; and providing for the establishment of a Junior college curriculum whereby students will attend the vocational center for two years and continue advanced study at Piedmont Technical College (students may receive advanced placement as a result of an articulation agreement between the two schools).

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The Abbeville Career Vocational Center is one of 55 area Vocational Centers in South Carolina. The mission of area vocational centers is to provide high school students with marketable skills in occupational courses that also grant credits toward graduation. The Abbeville Vocational Center currently offers six occupational courses that include one licensing course.

The Career Center has a current capacity of approximately 200 students. At the end of the 1984-85 school year enrollment was 146, an 8.5 percent drop over the previous year. The Career Center had not operated at capacity since its construction in 1980 and enrollment has declined for the past two years. Declining enrollment resulted in lower placement rates and fewer students available for cooperative programs and vocational competitive events. The absence of a formal recruitment plan that provided parents and students with information pertinent to the value of vocational education may have contributed to declining enrollment.

The purpose of this study was to develop a plan for increasing student enrollment in courses at the Abbeville Career Vocational Center. The investigation focused on positive means of recruiting and retaining students needed to reach a goal of 200 students. Since five of the six courses were two year courses, low first year enrollment created difficulty in maintaining enrollment in some second year programs. Because of the size of some first year courses retention rates of less than fifty percent caused the second year courses to be discontinued.

This study investigated means of recruiting additional students to take courses at the Abbeville Career Center. To meet the objective of increasing student enrollment, two methods were used to research pertinent information. They were: a literature search to find relevant materials and interviews with key persons who had experienced similar problems. This data was compiled to develop a comprehensive recruitment plan. This plan was reviewed and revised and evaluative criteria established to provide useful feedback for improvement.

Chapter 2

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

Regardless of the claims of vocational researchers and other practitioners with vested interest, "Vocational Education must compete with all other programs for resources, visibility, and attention from key school administrators" (Good 1985). This statement highlights the competition facing vocational administrators in their quest to attract quality students to the programs. Decreased in enrollment at the Abbeville Career Center underscored the need to develop a plan recruitment plan.

Abbeville Career Center may benefit from the results of this study by increased enrollment and improved articulation between high school counselors and the vocational counselors as a result of a specific plan developed to improve enrollment. An acceptable recruitment plan is being developed also to meet the requirements of the State Program Standards Committee that will conduct its assessment of the Abbeville

Career Center during the 1986-87 school year and to provide an enhanced image of vocational education. Boyle (1980) substantiated the importance of image in vocational education when he stated that, "it's time for people to take action to build the image of vocational education and skilled work."

This practicum related to the Vocational Occupational and Technical Seminar, The Emergence of Vocational, Technical, and Occupational Education in America. The study specifically addressed the design and development of a marketing strategy to retain and recruit students for vocational and occupational courses. A major focus of this effort was directed toward increasing the awareness of secondary students as to the significance of vocational education and the opportunities available as a result of skill training.

Swanson (1982) asks a familiar question posed to secondary vocational educators quite often, "Is high school the place for vocational education?" Many students and parents believe vocational education should be left to secondary institutions. These beliefs may have serious implications for the continued existence of vocational education at the secondary level. Swanson further asserts that,

> History will undoubtedly show the secondary schools which endeavor to be comprehensive in the choices offered for substantive instruction identified with technical, scientific and work oriented life roles are the products of a struggle by strong professional leaders working in communities having a high level of concern for their young.

Since some students and parents had doubts about the value of secondary vocational education, an aggressive recruitment effort was

necessary to inform students and parents that vocational education is a viable option to choose in acquiring skill training.

"Promote the Vocational Program," an article by the National Center for Research in Education suggested that vocational administrators need background information and skills in selecting and using appropriate promotional activities and techniques. The report further suggests that goals and objectives be set for promoting vocational programs and evaluative criteria be established. Promotion of vocational education involves both recruitment and retention in two year vocational programs.

Many factors are impacting on the enrollment of students in vocational courses. The increased emphasis on academics recommended in the report A Nation at Risk included many changes for the nation's education system. One recommendation that specificallly affects vocational education is the increased number of academic courses needed to graduate (United States Department of Education 1983). South Carolina responded to this study by increasing the units required to graduate from eighteen to twenty (South Carolina Schools 1985). Since the required units of math and science have been increased, schools must either lengthen the school day or sacrifice some electives such as vocational courses. An effective recruitment plan should address vocational education in a positive prospective so that the elective chosen will be a vocational one.

The need for students to be more aware of the positive aspects of vocational education is addressed in a study by Lankard, Kang and Bishop (1985) all affiliated with the National Center for Research in Vocational Education that concluded,

> Increasing the number of vocational courses and equally reducing the number of academic courses increases the earnings of most students. But, the earnings benefit of this substitution falls as the number of vocational courses increases and the number of academic courses decreases. Men achieve their highest earnings in the calendar year after high school when 36 percent of their courses are vocational; women achieve their highest earnings when 48 percent of their courses are vocational.

These findings provide support for a high school curriculum that offers vocational as well as academic courses. Worthington (1984) stated that the National Center for Research in Education found that enrollment in vocational education is associated with a higher retention of tenth and twelfth grade students. Higher retention rates of tenth and twelfth graders are another significant benefit of vocational education at the secondary level.

An effective recruitment plan may serve as a means to market the school within the community it serves. According to the Practitioner (1985),

> Marketing sense concentrates on those who use school services, parents and students. People want to be successful, appreciated, and involved. When educational marketing conveys a sense of all that an institution does, patrons respond more favorably. They enroll their children, they volunteer, they promote the school, and they pass tax levies.

It may be concluded from this study that marketing the school is an essential aspect of the recruitment process.

McGrath and Pekelo (1983) in cooperation with the Massachusetts State Department of Education developed a two-volume guide to provide vocational educators in Massachusetts with some practical approaches for implementing recruitment strategies. A significant premise from the guide by McGrath and Pekelo was that vocational schools have always

competed with academic programs to enroll students, but over the next ten years this competition is expected to escalate because of decreasing numbers of high school age students. If these conclusions prevail, vocational centers will likely find it necessary to increase their emphasis on recruitment even more as the available high school age students decrease.

In order for two year programs of study to exist in secondary vocational centers, it is equally important to stress retention as well as recruitment. A State Department of Education pamphlet, "Enrollment in Vocational Education Programs at Area Vocational Centers" refers to retention as one of the necessary components of a well developed enrollment procedure between the area vocational center and the cooperating high school (South Carolina State Department of Education 1986).

Fox and Kitler (1985) stated that, the retention issue is important for several reasons. A responsive institution wants to create as much satisfaction as it reasonably can. Pragmatically satisfied students are less likely to drop out. Considering the limited pool of potential college students and the effort and other costs of recruitment, the school should make a concerted effort to retain students who, with some help, could succeed at the institution. Although Fox and Kitler make these statements in reference to college students, the same analogy is relevant to retaining students in secondary vocational education.

Muckenfus (1985), an area vocational director, reported that minimal success in retention had been attained by interviewing potential program dropouts, before the end of the first year. This was an effort

to identify problems by using a one-on-one consultation approach to find out why students were not returning for second your courses.

Godell (1980) asserted that, "public relations is the communication link between your vocational program and the people you need to support it." Godell further stated that a program may be of the highest quality but without an effective public relations plan the vocational program may never have a chance to prove its worth. If this is true, then it may be assumed that an effective recruitment plan must incorporate effective public relations strategies as a means of communicating the importance of vocational education to the people.

Chapter 3

PROCEDURES

The study investigated means of recruiting additional students to take vocational courses at the Abbeville Career Center. To meet the objectives of increasing enrollment, two methods were used to research and organize information pertinent to recruitment. They were: (1) a literature search to find relevant materials and (2) interviews with key persons who have experienced similar problems.

The literature search examined materials in the following categories:

(1) Materials pertinent to school image and public relations.
(2) Objectives of recruitment efforts.
(3) Positive retention methods.
(4) Surveys relevant to students' attitudes about courses they select.
(5) Cost of implementation.
(6) Provisions of Section 59-53-1960 of the Education Improvement Act of 1984.

(7) Evaluative criteria, goals and means of acquiring useful feedback. (Isaac and Michaels 1984).

This data was compiled to develop a comprehensive recruitment plan. The plan was reviewed by the vocational counselors, counselors from the three high schools served by the Abbeville Career Center, vocational teachers, and the vocational director.

The initial draft of the plan was presented to the vocational counselor and shared subsequently with the group. The major components of the plan, recruitment strategies, retention, goals and objectives, and development of time tables were incorporated as a result of brainstorming sessions with the group. It was agreed that a 10 percent increase in enrollment in courses at the vocational school would constitute a successful plan. This goal became the basis for evaluating the plan's effectiveness and was incorporated in the final draft.

As part of the validation for the recruitment and retention plan, a draft was sent to Wayman Stover, South Carolina State Department of Education consultant for Guidance and Placement, for review. Stover was selected because of his statewide responsibilities to assist vocational centers in attracting more and better students. In order to receive feedback from a peer vocational administrator, a draft was sent to Winston Barr, vocational director at Grand Strand Vocational Center. The initial phase of the plan was implemented by the vocational counselor and the three high school guidance counselors.

The population selected for this study was tenth and eleventh grade high school students in Abbeville School District Number 60. This population was chosen because the Defined Minimum Program (a composite

of state department regulations governing secondary curriculum in South Carolina) recommends that two-year courses in vocational centers consist of eleventh grades (first year) and twelfth graders during the second year (South Carolina Defined Minimum Program 1984). The tenth grade population is targeted in order to enroll them when they become eleventh graders.

Eleventh graders were included in the recruitment population because of the Industrial Sewing class. This class is a one-year course and juniors who are rising seniors are able to go directly into the job market. Placement records indicate that the seniors have a higher placement rate because of the nature of this course.

Limitations

This study may not be generalized without modifications beyond the populations for which it was designed. Special needs clientel are not included in this plan because their needs or handicaps must be evaluated on an individual basis by a special staffing committee before they can be assigned to an occupational study area. Because of the specific nature of the student population in Abbeville School District Number 60, another vocational center using this study for similar purposes may encounter difficulty. As the recruitment plan is implemented fully and evaluated, variables such as student population shifts, changes in course offerings, and available staff may provide a basis for modification.

Assumptions

The students targeted for this study were assumed to be a reasonable homogeneous group. Students in the college preparatory programs were not considered as available for recruitment. Past experience has indicated the enrollment from this group have not been significant to a degree to warrant recruitment efforts. Data from the initial meetings with counselors indicated that those responsible for implementing the plan would cooperate to focus their efforts on those populations indicated as being targeted by the recruitment plan.

Definition of Terms

A glossary is included in this practicum to provide clarification of terms that may be ambiguous to individuals not familiar with this research.

1. Abbeville Career Center - One of the fifty-five vocational institutions in South Carolina that provide vocational and occupational training primarily to high school students.

2. College Preparatory Students - Those students who have chosen a course of study to prepare them to pursue higher education.

3. Director - The administrative head of the vocational center, which in this study, is the Abbeville Career Center.

4. Education Improvement Act of 1984 (EIA) - A fifty-five page document passed by the House and Senate in the state of South Carolina drafted to effect extensive reforms to the state's educational system and mandating a one cent tax increase to pay for its implementation.

5. Feeder High School - Any one of the three high schools in Abbeville School District 60 that send students to the Abbeville Career Center.

6. High School Counselors - Any one of four counselors from the feeder high schools who are responsible for assisting students in course selections and career choices through an objective guidance approach.

7. Recruitment Plan - A systematic arrangemment and design of a strategy to increase the enrollment at the Abbeville Career Center.

8. Special Needs Clientele - Students classified as handicapped or disadvantaged according to Federal and State guidelines.

9. Vocational Counselor - A guidance counselor employed at the vocational school who performs the similar duties as high school counselors in a vocational setting.

10. Vocational Teachers - May be Trade and Industrial teachers or teachers with college degrees who teach vocational courses.

Chapter 4

RESULTS

This study resulted in the development of a recruitment plan that included a timetable to increase enrollment and retention at the Abbeville Career Center (see Appendix A for recruitment retention plan). As a result of the investigation, materials and strategies were included based on their significance to the investigation.

As a result of brainstorming sessions with the vocational counselor, the three high school counselors, and the vocational director an initial draft of this plan was prepared. The draft was reviewed by the group and was found to be an acceptable recruitment plan to implement at the Abbeville Career Center. The draft plan was sent to Wayman Stover, consultant for guidance and placement, South Carolina State Department of Education. Stover (1985) stated. "The activities

seem practical, relevant and can be easily implemented in the vocational center/school setting."

Stover's comments resulted also in a suggestion that a future project include accommodation of student problems relating to transportation problems, scheduling conflicts, and required course failures. Since problems of this type suggest solutions unique to each school served by the vocational center, they were not included in this plan but may be included in a future investigation of this type of greater depth. A letter from Stover is included in the appendix (see appendix C for letter).

As a result of sending a draft of the recruitment and retention plan to Winston Barr for review, a telephone interview was held. Barr (1986) stated, "A similar plan developed by the Grand Strand Vocational Center with emphasis on recruitment of students into non traditional courses was quite successful." Non traditional students were defined as males enrolling in traditionally female courses and females enrolling in traditionally male oriented courses.

A review of materials pertinent to school image and public relations resulted in the findings of a public relations calendar (Godell 1980). This calendar was adapted to fit the needs of the Abbeville Career Center and is included in Appendix A as a timetable for implementing and carrying out public relations approaches that are effective, efficient, and inexpensive and can be used by the vocational administrator. The suggested approaches were: (1) brochures, use well designed brochures to tell students and parents about the vocational program; (2) addresses, use formal and informal speaking opportunities

to communicate the objectives of your program; (3) a slide presentation, a slide presentation correlated with a tape recorder is a very effective method of communicating the flavor and substance of a program; (4) newsletters, periodic newsletters should be a regular part of a public relations program; (5) letters, letters to parents can describe a program's objectives, appreciation letters to contributors; (6) news releases, everything newsworthy deserves an audience; (7) open house, invite the community to an open house where they can see, touch and try out equipment; (8) awards, make pictures of your students receiving awards on awards day; (9) field trips, let the public know that learning in your vocational program goes beyond the classroom; (10) fund raising, fund raising is for a special causes, be sure to get media coverage; (11) field experience, make sure new stories are made of students working at their assigned co-op stations; and (12) learning from others, observe other radio and television spots to see what other agencies and schools are doing to promote their organization, make notes on success or failure of each public relations effort with colleagues at the end of the year. As a result of these findings Godell's timetable was included in the recruitment plan.

A review of literature relating to the use of the media as a recruitment tool resulted in the finding of an article "Getting it on the Air" (Lloyd 1980). Lloyd listed two basic approaches to planning a radio campaign for recruitment. He suggests making a complete review of all resources in your school's service area by consulting a media book or by calling radio and television stations. Get to know the people in radio or television who are directly responsible for certain phases of

the programming. Example: new directors or new assignment editors should get news items and program directors should be contacted for program ideas. Find out from these persons the kinds of programming each station does and the pertinent information relevant to tailoring a message to fit the format.

Lloyd suggested also that the information obtained from the review of the broadcast media should be organized into a workable system. Each media service should be categorized with specific requirements such as formats, writing, copy requirements, and procedures for public service announcements. This file will expedite time in preparing a copy for media broadcasts.

As a result of the article by Lloyd (1980) an inquiry was made of the media available to the Abbeville School District Number 60 service area. The Abbeville Development Board was contacted. According to Smith, (1985). Abbeville County is served by one newspaper, The Press and Banner, published weekly; one radio station, WABV, that plays primarily country and western music; and one cable television station channel 10 that broadcasts some local events.

Baylor (1985) a presenter at the fall conference of vocational directors announced that a cassette tape with one minute spots prepared for radio broadcast by an advertising company was being prepared for each vocational center. A follow-up meeting with Baylor resulted in obtaining the cassette with a radio spot that could be used by the Abbeville Career Center.

A review of materials relevant to goals and objectives of recruitment resulted in the finding of a statewide plan for the

recruitment of vocational students in South Carolina. These objectives were selected because they applied to most of the recruitment needs at the Abbeville Career Center and could be incorporated with minimum modifications. (South Carolina State Department of Education 1985). The goals and objectives of this plan were incorporated into the Abbeville Career Center recruitment plan (see Appendix B for state objectives for recruitment).

A study of surveys relevant to student attitudes on attending or not attending vocational education centers resulted in the finding of a study by Smiley (1977) that used a sample of 100 eleventh graders in South Carolina. This study concluded that the number one factor influencing a student to select a vocational course was the guidance counselor. Peer influence by a friend or a fellow student rated two and three respectively.

Correspondence with Keaton (1985) revealed that no additional funds were available to fund a recruitment effort at the Abbeville Career Center. As a result, the recruitment plan was designed to be implemented using existing personnel and funding.

A review of the Education Improvement Act resulted in the finding of the specific language of Section 59-53-1960 which states,

> Students must be advised prior to enrollment in a job preparatory program of possible continuations of the program if placement data indicate possible discontinuation, and of the employment outlook for graduates of the program. Students enrolling in vocational programs which are not preparatory for employment must be clearly advised of this fact by the school district.

Based on this statement, as a part of the recruitment effort, students must be informed prior to enrolling if a course may possibly be discontinued because of low placement.

A review of literature relative to effective retention resulted in finding of conclusions by Fox and Kitler (1985). According to Fox and Kitler, an essential aspect of the retention process is the organization and assessment of the retention posture. In relation to the admissions process Fox and Kitler stated also that counseling and the creating of a caring and responsive environment were essential elements in helping new students to adjust. As a result of reviewing this study, the vocational counselor was included in all facets of initiating the final plan.

Oswald (1986) South Carolina State Director of Vocational addressing the winter conference of vocational directors stated that a video tape, the "The Competitive Edge" was available to assist vocational schools in making recruitment presentations. Further correspondence with Oswald resulted in the acquisition of the video cassette. This cassette will be included in the presentation of the recruitment plan because of its relevance to the marketing of vocational education.

After reviewing recruitment and retention strategies, it became apparent that a number of good plans were available. Most of the plans contained various elements of the format used by Fox and Kitler (1985). As a result the Fox and Kitler model was used to develop the recruitment and retention plan for the Abbeville Career Center.

The comments from the reviewers were favorable and referred to depth and expansion in future studies rather than revision of the

present plan. Since the present plan was a culmination of ideas from local counselors that were subsequently researched, revision has been continuous throughout the investigation. As a result, this plan will be implemented in its present form.

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION , IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study a formal recruitment plan is necessary for an educational institution to attract and retain students. The conclusions that resulted from this research suggested that one of the most important tasks facing an institution seeking to increase enrollment is the enhancement of the image of the institution, in this case an area vocational school.

Most studies suggested that insufficient enphasis is placed on retention when compared with recruitment. If these assumptions are accurate, then one of the important aspects of a good recruitment plan should be a complete follow through of matching a student properly with the institution and maintenance of that student within the institution by using surveys or other instruments that provide feedback on student satisfaction. The implications of this approach to vocational recruitment suggests that administrators should devise means of indentifying the kinds of students who can benefit from their programs and will achieve the greatest satisfaction from admission to alumni. This group should be targeted for enrollment and will likely result in the enhancement of the school's image through their success.

The ultimate success of the recruitment plan is increased enrollment and retention that result in satisfied program graduates. At the community level these satisfied graduates are expected to result in an increased supply of skilled workers made possible through their vocational training. This expanded supply of workers will have implications for a more viable economy from the enlarged skilled labor supply.

Abbeville Career Center will be able to improve its competitive edge in school contests as result of increased enrollment. Additional students will provide greater availability of talent. Since the school has not been operating at capacity, increased enrollment will result in more adequate use of the facilities.

Public relations is a tool that may be used to inform the public and create a positive school image. A successful recruitment plan must incorporate sufficient strategies for increasing the school's visibility and acceptance within the community it serves. If the public relations plan developed as a result of this investigation is effective, it may result in more cooperative opportunities because of potential employers becoming more aware of the mission and goals of the Abbeville Career Center. Improved support from business, industry, and parents may cause the school board to react more favorably to budget recommendations because of perceived emphasis on the institution by major influences of the community.

Conclusions from a survey by Smiley (1977) suggested that the high school guidance counselor had considerable influence on student course selection. These findings provide a basis for increased emphasis on

orientating and informing the guidance counselors in order to communicate the value of vocational education to the students. This approach may have implications for developing strategies to involve the feeder high school counselors in all phases of the vocational curricular planning process.

After reviewing literature on recruitment and retention, it became apparent that the implementation of a carefully designed model would require considerable time and effort to be effective. The Abbeville Career Center presently has a one-half time vocational counselor. It may be difficult to assess the true value of the plan unless a full-time staff member is assigned to implement it. A planned recruitment retention effort will result in the need for increased monitoring and coordination of the feeder high school counselors.

Increased enrollment at the Abbveville Career Center may also increase the number of students who desire to continue their education at the technical college level. This may be true because of the similarities in course offerings at the two schools. Increased enrollment of vocational students at the Abbeville Career Center will result in a greater need for cooperation with the local technical colleges. This may provide a smoother transition from high school to college for these students who desire additional occupational training.

As a result of this study, the following recommendations are being offered to the Abbeville School District 60 Board of Trustees: (1) that funds be allocated to hire a full-time vocational guidance counselor to implement this plan; (2) that the vocational counselors and the high school counselors develop a plan for monthly meetings to discuss

recruitment and retention strategies; (3) that a half day inservice be granted to all guidance personnel implementing this plan on an annual basis; and (4) that provisions be made for the establishment of a Jr. College curriculum whereby students will attend the vocational center for two years and continue advanced study at Piedmont Technical College (students may receive advanced placement as a result of an articulation agreement between the two schools).

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION PLAN

ABBEVILLE CAREER CENTER

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION PLAN

BY

BOBBY L. CROSBY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The recruitment retention plan for the Abbeville Career Center for the 1986-87 school year will focus on increasing student enrollment by 10 percent a year for 1986-87, 1987-88, and 1988-89. The responsibility for implementing this plan will be shared by the Abbeville Career Center and the three feeder high schools, Abbeville High School, Calhoun Falls High School, and Dixie High School.

The plan will encompass the formation of a recruitment committee, consisting of the vocational director, the vocational counselor, and the high school counselors. The plan will be implemented using existing personnel and funds. The major expenditures will be for revision of the course booklets and transportation for student tours of the Career Center.

The purpose of the executive summary is to provide district level administrators with the major focus of the plan before reading documents for supporting data and analysis.

SITUATION ANALYSIS

Opportunities and Threats

Opportunities

1. Seventy percent of the students in the high school served by the Abbeville Career Center are not attending college.

2. A recent needs assessment has indicated that the job market is good to excellent for most of the occupations offered at the Abbeville Career Center.

3. Based on the placement rates, employers have been receptive to hiring graduates of the Abbeville Career Center.

Threats

1. The stigma of manual training attached to vocational courses have discouraged many applicants.

2. Failure of a coordinated public relations effort with high schools and the local technical college has affected the image of vocational education.

Strengths

1. Students have placed well in district competing events for the past two years.

2. Cooperative education, opportunities with local employers increased 100 percent.

3. A National Vocational Honor Society has been chartered to recognize outstanding vocational students.

Weaknesses

1. The Abbeville Career Center has a part-time vocational counselor. The counselor is not always available to counsel students on retention or address other needs that might influence student satisfaction.

2. A formal recruitment and retention plan had not been developed in the past.

Goals

In accordance with its philosophy and mission, Abbeville Career Center is committed to the following goals:

1. To offer occupational training at the secondary level that will lead to meaningful employment.

2. To provide opportunities for adults in the community to upgrade existing skills or acquire new skills through the adult education program.

3. To provide services to handicapped students in areas where their training needs can be met.

4. To encourage civic responsibility and democratic leadership through student participation in clubs aand assembly programs.

5. To provide career counseling and placement assistance to students through our guidance services.

6. To interact effectively with the various publics that impact on the Abbeville Career Center. A diagram is included (see Figure 1) to illustrate those publics that influence the decision-making processes involved in the recruitment and retention of students at the Career Center.

7. To provide co-op opportunities to students recommended by their instructors as being able to combine classwork and job experience to enhance the quality of their occupational training.

Objectives

1. To increase the number of students attending the Abbeville Career Center by 10 percent for the next school year.

2. To reduce the attrition rate to not more than 10 percent.

3. To attract a better balance of students from the three high schools as evidenced by an examination of the students per one hunderd high school students attending the Abbeville Career Center.

Retention

A portion of this plan addresses retention. Since it is more time consuming to attract a new student than to retain the present student, retention efforts may produce more economical results than recruitment. According to Andersen (1985), "Retention is viewed as internal

marketing, unlike recruitment activities that are considered external marketing." Although student records indicate retention rates in most classes are 60 percent or better, the guidance planning committee saw this as an area of improvement.

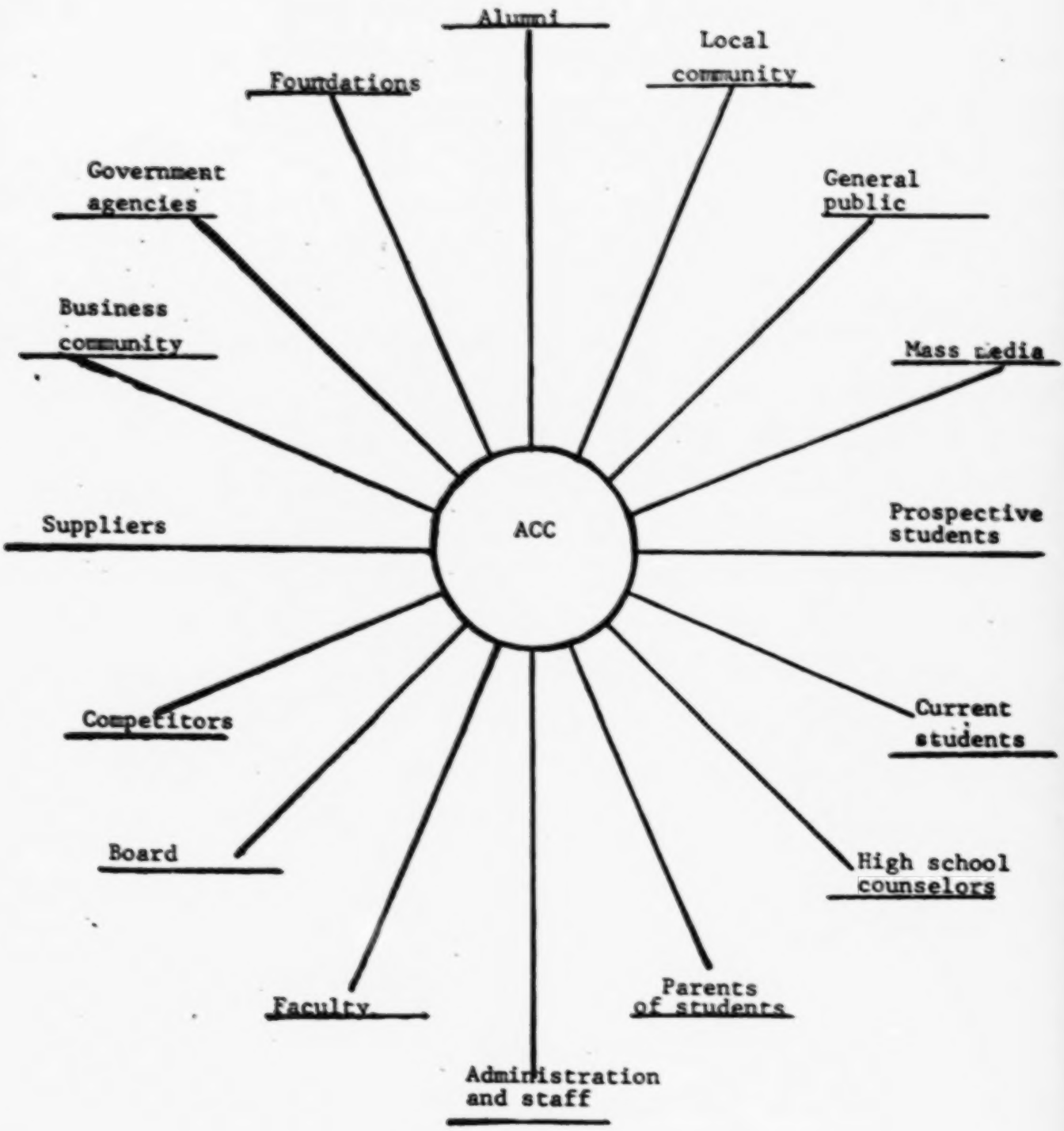

Figure 1
Public's Impacting on the
Abbeville Career Center

MARKETING STRATEGY

Target Market

The criteria for the target market is 11th and 12th grade secondary students, male or female who reside in the attendance areas of Abbeville School District 60. This group includes also handicapped students whose needs may be met by occupational training.

A breakdown of the target markets revealed that 70 percent of all students who attend the Abbeville Career Center are Abbeville High School students. Since this market comprised the bulk of the students it was necessary to allocate more time and effort to target this group. Calhoun Falls and Dixie High Schools comprised about 30 percent of the students, 15 percent each. These three high schools are the three key target markets for concentrating the recruitment effort. A minor effort, basically orientation will be implemented at the middle school level. The two schools targeted for this strategy will be John C. Calhoun and Wright Middle Schools.

DEVELOPING THE RECRUITMENT RETENTION PLAN

The Vocational Director recognized the need for a comprehensive recruitment/retention plan after the Abbeville Career Center showed a drop in enrollment for three consecutive years. The strategy began by meeting and brainstorming with the vocational counselor and the three high school counselors. This effort was expanded to include the faculty in order to involve the entire staff in the recruitment process.

The focus of this recruitment plan was to present the Career Center's mission and goals so that the quality and image of the program would not be diminished. The initial plan was developed and reviewed by the vocational director, vocational counselor, teachers, and the high school counselor. Parts of the plan were implemented in 1985-86 with full implementation planned for 1986-87.

RECRUITMENT/RETENTION ACTION PLAN

Target Market: 10th and 11th Grade Students Who Attend Abbeville, Calhoun Falls and Dixie High Schools

Objectives:

I. To gain greater exposure of the programs offered at the Abbeville Career Center.

II. To recruit the "non four year" college bound students by emphasizing the advantages of acquiring a skill while completing requirements for a diploma.

III. To retain students who enroll at the Abbeville Career Center through proper orientation and maintenance of an environment that leads to student satisfaction.

Action Plan for Implementation

Activity	Time Frame	Persons/Persons responsible
Review each program by school to identify enrollment problems by course.	September	Vocational counselor Vocational director
Meet with high school counselors to determine the prevailing enrollment problems encountered in sending students to the vocational center	September	Vocational counselor
Hold assembly to orientate new students, explain discipline, rules and regulations to facilitate their transition to the Career Center. The student handbook will be distributed to each student.	September	Vocational director
Develop a monthly meeting schedule with high school guidance counselors.	September	Vocational counselor

Activity	Time Frame	Person/Persons responsible
Develop a list of the types of publicity releases to be included in the publicity plan to include: course announcements; registration for classes; graduation and awards exercises; district and state competition winners; national winners; announcements of the introduction of new programs; donations of equipment; activities of campus organizations; cooperative education students; and articles of interest on individual staff, administration and faculty.	September October	Vocational director Vocational counselor Teachers Student representatives

Activity	Time Frame	Person/Persons responsible
Evaluate all second year classes for rate of retention	October	Vocational director

Activity	Time Frame	Person/Persons responsible
Encourage career center personnel to exchange ideas with faculty at the high schools to enhance communication and understanding of the career center offerings.	October	Vocational director
Hold "brain storming" sessions with teachers to explore new methods of recruiting and retaining students at the Abbeville Career Center.	November	Vocational director

Activity	Time Frame	Person/Persons responsible
Review and revise course booklet	January	Vocational counselor
Schedule visits for 10th grade students and selected 11th grade students to tour the career center	January	Vocational counselor High School counselors
Meet with high school counselors to review programs and vocational offerings before planning visit to high schools.	January	Vocational counselor
Select students and projects to be included in high school career days	January	Vocational counselor
Attend Abbeville High School Career Day	February	Vocational counselor selected students
Attend Calhoun Falls High School Career Day	February	Vocational counselor selected students
Attend Dixie High School Career Day	February	Vocational counselor selected students
Incorporate booklets, video presentation in visits to high schools	February	Vocational counselor

Publish announcements in local newspaper asking parents of prospective 11th graders to visit the Career Center during open house	February	Vocational counselor
Send a memo to all faculty members to hold retention conferences with all first year students	March	Vocational director
Visit Wright Middle and John C. Calhoun Middle School to make a presentation to the 8th grade classes	March	Vocational director Vocational counselor

Activity	Time Frame	Person/Persons responsible
Publish a Career Center Honor Roll in Newsletter and local paper	October January March May	Vocational counselor
Develop a "distinguished vocational student" program at the Abbeville Career		Vocational director Teachers
Send Career Center registration materials to high schools	March	Vocational counselor
Mail the Career Center Newsletter to all senior and junior high schools	October December March May	Newsletter Adviser
Review and update the Career Center public relations calendar	June	Vocational director Teachers

PUBLIC RELATIONS CALENDAR

Public Relations Calendar for Abbeville Career Center 1986-87

Month: **September**

Goal: To plan campaign

To inform parents of the goals, objectives and expectations of the various vocational programs

To inform new students of vocational organizations

To familiarize community business and industry persons with vocational programs

Method and person/s responsible: Meeting, letters to parents of students who are enrolled in the program, posters and bulletin boards - Slide/tape program and oral presentation to a civic organization: Vocational director, instructors and students

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Month: **October**

Goal: To acquaint faculty with vocational program

To inform parents, administrators, students, and teachers as to goals, objectives of vocational programs

Method and person/s responsible : Coffee hour, slide/tape progam, tour and newsletter - Vocational director, all instructors, selected students and student organizations

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Month: **November**

Goal: To let students know there is a cooperative education program

To familiarize community business and industry persons with vocational programs

Method and person/s responsible: Bulletin board and brochure, slide/tape program and oral presentation to a civic organization - Co-op coordinator, vocational director, one instructor, and a student

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Month: December

Goal: To inform parents of students progress

To maintain relationship with teachers responsible for prevocational courses

Method and person/s responsible: Letter with invitation to parent/teacher conference, coffee meeting - Vocational director, instructors

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Month: January

Goals: To familiarize the community with programs available in vocational education

To maintain communication with potential employers and teachers responsible for pre-vocational courses

Method and person/s responsible: Career Day. Career information and demonstrations for students, business and industrial fair provide vendors with an opportunity to display the latest equipment - Vocational director, instructors, and students

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Month: February

Goal: To inform teachers, guidance counselors, students, administrators, parents, and the community as to the benefits of vocational education

To inform all audiences about the work of students

To acquaint students with the vocational education programs available

To inform business and industry of vocational opportunities

Method and person/s responsible: Request mayor to proclaim National Vocational education Week. Distribute brochures, prepare short a radio program, invite newspaper reporter to write an article on vocational education, second newsletter Follow-up on career day. Classroom visits by students who have prepared presentation, business and Industry luncheon - Vocational director, instructors, students, advisory committee members, and student organizations, students from various programs

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Month: March

Goal: To inform administration and board of education as to the successes of the vocational program

Method and person/s responsible: Written report of follow-up placement data - Vocational counselor

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Month: April

Goal: To inform the community as to the type of projects the students are developing

Method and person/s responsible: Exhibits and displays in various locations throughout the community or one central location if available Spring Festival Exhibits - Instructors and students

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Month: May

Goal: To show appreciation to employers who assisted with cooperative education program

To let faculty and students know the importance of vocational student organizations

To acquaint community with involvement of vocational student organizations

Method and person/s responsible:	Present awards won in competition at school awards ceremony
	Prepare story and picture of winners for newspaper
	Appreciation dinner - Vocational director and co-op coordinator
	Advisors of student organizations
	Advisors with assistance from vocational director

Month:	**June**
Goal:	To evaluate the effectiveness of public relations in 1986-87
Method and person/s responsible:	Meeting - Vocational director, teachers and students

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CONTROLS

EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ABBEVILLE CAREER CENTER'S RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION PLAN

Since Abbeville Career Center had no formal recruitment or retention plan in the past, means for assessing the effectiveness of recruitment and retention has not been established. As a result a method of assessing the effectiveness of this plan will be included as a part of the total model.

This plan is to a large extend quantitative in scope. One of the objectives of the plan is to increase the number of students attending the Career Center from Abbeville, Calhoun Falls, and Dixie High Schools. To assess the effectiveness of this objective the data reflecting enrollment should be compared from the previous year to see if the 10 percent targeted increase is being achieved.

Kitler and Fox (1985) identified three types of marketing control; they included: annual plan control; revenue lost control; and strategic control. The type of control that will be used to assess this plan will be the annual plan control. This plan uses performance analysis, market-share analysis, and marketing-expense-to-performance ratios as a means to monitor the recruitment plan. This method was selected because of the quantitative nature of the objectives this plan seeks to achieve.

The approaches used to evaluate the effectiveness of the recruitment retention plan at the Abbeville Career Center will include: performance analysis, as measured by the actual number of students who enrolled following implementation of the plan; market-share analysis, a review of whether Abbeville Career Center is gaining or losing students to other competitive vocational courses; marketing expense to

performance analysis an evaluation of the personnel effort and expense in relationship to the actual performance of the plan, the key question in this approach will be whether the increase is significant enough to offset the effort and expense; and market attitude tracking, a means of assessing client attitudes toward the institution, this approach may be particularly effective in identifying retention problems, this will be accomplished through the use of suggestion boxes and student satisfaction surveys. The data derived from the results of these approaches will provide the basis for assessing the effectiveness of the recruitment and retention plan at the Abbeville Career Center. This information will provide direction for modification and revision of the plan as needed. The purpose of marketing assessment or recruitment effectiveness may be summarized as stated by Kitler and Fox (1985).

> "The purpose of a marketing audit is to determine marketing problem areas and to suggest corrective short-term and long-term action plans to improve the institution's overall marketing effectiveness."

APPENDIX B

SOUTH CAROLINA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION OBJECTIVES FOR RECRUITMENT OF VOCATIONAL STUDENTS

SOUTH CAROLINA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION OBJECTIVES

FOR RECRUITMENT OF VOCATIONAL STUDENTS

Maintain a positive working relationship for feeder school counselors and other personnel in order to have accessibility to potential vocational students and to achieve a mutual goal of providing needed services for all students.

Meet with feeder school counselors and administrators to plan and schedule those recruitment activities that will involve both the receiving and sending schools.

Provide information about the vocational curricula, employment outlook, course job preparatory status and training opportunities for potential and current students, parents, community leaders, and faculty and staff members of the local school districts.

Conduct vocational presentations for tenth grade students through English classes at feeder schools.

Conduct vocational facility tours on a systematic basis for students of all feeder schools (Elementary and Secondary).

Provide success stories of current and former vocational education students in the local news media.

Conduct inservices for feeder school faculty and staff to create additional awareness and knowledge of vocational education programs.

Coordinate activities with Prevocational Education teachers as a means of assisting potential vocational students with the career decision-making process.

Survey first-year vocational students to determine which students will or will not return to the vocational training center for the next school year.

Meet with elementary school counselors and administrators to plan strategies for orientating elementary school students and teachers of vocational education opportunities and training opportunities.

APPENDIX C

LETTER, STOVER

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
COLUMBIA 29201

Charlie G. Williams
State Superintendent of Education

April 10, 1986

Mr. Bobby L. Crosby, Director
Abbeville Career Center
P. O. Box 280
Abbeville, S. C. 29620

Dear Mr. Crosby:

Thank you for allowing me to review the document, "Development of A Comprehensive Recruitment Plan to Increase Enrollment and Retention at the Abbeville Career Center." After review of this document, I believe it can be used effectively to enhance your recruitment activities at the Abbeville Career Center and, thereby, increase enrollment in vocational education programs. The activities seem practical, relevant and can be easily implemented in the vocational center/school setting.

Another phase of the recruitment-retention process that you may want to consider in a future project may be accommodation of students as it relates to this subject. In some instances, students may be adequately informed of vocational education opportunities at the area vocational center; however, they may not be able to follow through with enrollment due to other obstacles. By addressing some of these constraints (transportation problems, scheduling conflicts, required course failures, etc.) up front in your recruitment-retention activities, sometimes these problems can be avoided and enrollment at the area vocational center level can be maintained at an efficient rate.

Again, thank you for sharing it with me and please feel free to call on me if I can be of assistance to you as you implment it.

Sincerely,

Wayman Stover

Wayman Stover, Consultant
Vocational Guidance and Placement
Office of Vocational Education

/kpb

Enclosure